

**Title:** *Gallant*  
**Author:** V. E. Schwab  
**Genre:** Horror/Fantasy Fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Allie H., 9<sup>th</sup> grade

Date Reviewed: June 30, 2023

In *Gallant* by V.E. Schwab, Olivia Prior has lived all her life at Merilance School for Independent Girls. It is a dreary place for everyone, with strict Matrons, cramped dorms, and a gray, uniform atmosphere, but it is the only home Olivia has, and the only one she has ever known. Her family is a mystery, and the only clue is an old, battered journal that used to belong to her mother, who had left Olivia on the doorstep of Merilance when she was only an infant, and disappeared immediately after. From the journal, Olivia has gathered that her father had died around the time she was born, and her mother had begun to lose some of her sanity from the immense sorrow she faced. However, anything more than that is unknown. There are other mysteries in her life, too, such as the ghouls she sees, floating parts of dead people that disappear whenever she looks directly at them, and cannot touch her, but are mentioned by nobody. Olivia is mute, though, so she cannot say anything about them to anyone else. Being unable to speak, Olivia's future has a bad outlook—that is, until she receives a letter from her uncle inviting her to come home. However, that home, Gallant, is the very place Olivia's mother warned to stay away from in her journal. She may have been losing some touch with reality at the time she wrote that entry, but was the warning merely ramblings of a madwoman, or did they hold true meaning? After deciding to leave Merilance, Olivia discovers some of the truth, but that unfortunately creates even more questions: Why mustn't she go behind that crumbling wall? What information is her family withholding? And, most importantly, why does her cousin keep insisting that she must leave?

*Did the plot keep you interested?*

Yes, the plot was very interesting throughout the story. I couldn't put it down, and I was finished in less than a week!

*Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?*

The pace of the book was just right. There was certainly some action, but it was spaced between other important parts of the book, which created a perfect balance of tension and suspense, as well as action.

*What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?*

This book is appropriate for ninth graders, or people who are at about that level of reading. I am going into ninth grade, and found it to be appropriate for someone my age.

*What type of reader would you recommend this book to?*

I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in fantasy or books involving the supernatural. This book has elements of mystery as well, so people who enjoy that genre might like this book, too. It has relatively short chapters, which may make it appeal to reluctant readers.

*What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?*

I do not think there is any more information necessary for teens to know.

*5 stars: I'm really glad I read this book; it was awesome!*

I really enjoyed reading *Gallant*, and I would certainly recommend it to a friend. The plot was interesting throughout the novel, and the characters were intricate and well developed, making me care more about them, and by extension, the story. Overall, it was a great read.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Kylee K.

Date Reviewed: 8/31/2023

*Gallant* is set in early 20th century London and follows the story of 16 years-old Olivia Prior, a mute orphan who possesses the ability to see ghouls. She doesn't remember her life before the orphanage, and the only clue of her past is her mother's journal. The journal follows her mother as she meets her father, and as she ventures into madness following her father's death. The most memorable thing in the journal being her mother's final few words, "stay away from *Gallant*". It was unknown to Olivia what exactly *Gallant* is until that day the letter came. The letter's author, alleging to be Olivia's estranged uncle Arthur, tells her that he had finally found her after all these years and has come to ask for her to live with her family in their estate known as "*Gallant*". Despite her mother's warnings, Olivia still went. Things take a turn when Olivia arrives at the estate and is told that uncle Arthur died years ago. Those currently residing there are a married couple of ex-workers on the estate raising her cousin, Matthew, who is extremely bitter about her stay and wants her gone. Olivia proceeds to stay in the estate and begins seeing more and more ghouls of her family, including her mother. On the far side of the estate's garden stood a crumbled wall which Matthew fixes tirelessly each day but yet the wall never gets better. Olivia was told to stay away from the "wall" but her curiosity got the better of her and as she got closer to the wall, a gust of wind blew her mother's journal onto the other side. As she went to pick it up, she realized that the crumbled wall had extended seemingly indefinitely, and she was now in a darker, bleaker, and more sinister version of *Gallant*. Here Olivia saw Death and was chased by his guards. Just as she was about to be caught, a ghoul of Prior descent saved her, and she soon realizes that she can summon the ghouls in this shadow world to protect her. As she was making her escape, Olivia saw a little boy curled up unconscious in a fountain. When she returned, the truth was explained to her. It's unveiled that the entity known as Death, living in the shadow world, is trapped there because of a war fought decades ago between the Priors and him. An iron door seals him and can only be opened by the blood of a Prior given willingly. So in order to escape, he has been haunting the dreams and waking hours of Priors one by one and leading them to their death. Matthew wanted Olivia gone because he thought he could protect her from this fate. Olivia also conceived that her mother fell in love with one of Death's shadow soldiers. But since the soldier was created by pieces of Death, as soon as her parents removed that cursed bone, her father passed away. When Matthew was informed of the little boy Olivia saw in the fountain, he realizes that it's his little brother who was lured into the shadow realm. Olivia went back into the shadow world to save Matthew's little brother, but it turned out to be a trick by Death. As Olivia gathers her ghouls and defeats Death by drawing him back. Matthew is killed when he saves Olivia from getting stabbed. Olivia marks the door closed with her and his blood on the iron protecting the rest of the world from the shadows. The book ends with Olivia staying at *Gallant* and looking after it.

*Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested?*

The plot was a breath of fresh air and explored a concept in such a way that I've never seen before. The protagonist Olivia was so perfectly written and every page of that book was written with a purpose. The book also cleverly used foreshadowing where Olivia is physically depicted to have a grayness to her, from her skin to her hair, which is later reviewed because her father was from the shadow realm.

*Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?*

The pacing of the book was excellent and I was extremely invested the entire time.

*What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?*

This book is appropriate for grade levels 8 and up, because there are certain gruesome scenes depicted with blood and suicide.

*What type of reader would you recommend this book to?*

I would recommend this to any horror and fantasy loving readers as well as mystery readers who don't mind a bit of magic as the book explored both of its main aspects really well and truly used words to create something so vivid and real in my mind.

*What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?*

As I've mentioned before, the use of words in this book is truly spectacular. As I think back to the plot, I can look back on it as a tv-show because of how remarkably the author was able to depict words.

I give this book a 5 star because of its striking plot and characters. Before this book, I rarely found female protagonists who didn't fall into the "girlboss" stereotype, but this book's female protagonist was just so astoundingly written.